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ABSTRACT

Although burnout has been extensively studied in business and various public services, only a few studies in education have been conducted, and these were primarily with teachers. Few studies of school administrator burnout have been conducted using instruments appropriate to that field. This paper summarizes a study examining the relationships between colleague perceptions and administrator burnout as measured by the Administrator Role Perception Inventory. This study also investigated the relationships between colleague perceptions and factors associated with burnout. The sample was drawn from the membership of a west coast, state-level organization of school administrators. All 2,113 members received a biographical questionnaire and the inventory; 62 percent completed and returned the packet. For a random sample of 159 members, colleague questionnaires were distributed, for a 48 percent return rate. Means and standard deviations for the subsample of administrators on the ARPI were calculated. Coefficients of correlation between the ARPI scales and colleague perceptions were also calculated. Results indicated that burnout exists and that the characteristics of burnout among school administrators (depression, lowered motivation, isolation from others, and reduced accomplishment) can be identified by colleagues. As this study suggests, it is possible to develop skills in identifying emerging burnout, perhaps aided by an inventory developed for this purpose. (18 references) (MLH)

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CAN COLLEAGUES IDENTIFY THE BURNED OUT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR?

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Can Colleagues Identify the Burned Out School Administrator?

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Objectives

The major objective of this study was to determine the relationships between colleague perceptions of public school administrators and administrator burnout as measured by the Administrator Role Perception Inventory. Secondarily, this study investigated the relationships between colleague perceptions and factors associated with burnout.

Perspectives

Burnout is "a debilitating psychological condition brought about by unrelieved work stress which results in depleted energy reserves" (Veninga & Spradley, 1981, p. 6). Kahn (1978, p. 6) defined burnout as a "syndrome of inappropriate attitudes toward clients and self often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms." Various characteristics of burnout have been identified, including a reduction in motivation (Otto, 1980; Ricken, 1980), reduction in productivity or achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Otto, 1980; Veninga & Spradley, 1981), various physical ailments (Freudenberger, 1977; Maslach & Jackson, 1979; Sparks, 1979), emotional exhaustion and negative self concepts (Pines & Maslach, 1978), and deteriorating relationships with clients and staff (Maslach, 1978; Mattingly, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978). Although burnout has been somewhat extensively studied in business and various public services, only a few studies have been conducted in education and these were primarily with teachers (Beck & Garguilo, 1983; Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1983; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). In relationship to school administrators, few studies of burnout have been conducted in which instruments appropriate to that field were used. Hales and Wax (1984) reported on an instrument designed to measure administrator

burnout (scale reliabilities ranged from .70 to .91). Waggoner and Hales (1984) studied the relationships between work values and burnout for a sample of metropolitan public school administrators. Hales and Wax (1986) discussed the relationship between burnout and stress, using data from a statewide sample of school administrators; theoretical implications of the results were discussed.

Methods and Data Source

The sample was drawn from the membership of a west coast, state-level organization of school administrators. Approximately 78% of the practicing administrators of the state belong to this organization. All members of the organization (2,113) received a biographical questionnaire and the Administrator Role Perception Inventory (Hales & Wax, 1982); 62% completed and returned the packet. For a random subsample of 159 members, colleague questionnaires were distributed, with a 48% return rate. The colleague questionnaire contained 19 items related to burnout; each respondent was to answer the question in reference to an identified administrator. For the total sample, the means for age and years in present job were 44.2 and 6.3, respectively; for administrators with colleague questionnaires, the means were 44.8 and 5.6, respectively. Means and standard deviations for the subsample of administrators on the ARPI were calculated. Coefficients of correlation between the ARPI scales and the perceptions of colleagues were calculated. It should be noted that reverse scoring was used on 4 colleague items so that high scores on each item reflected a less burned-out administrator as perceived by colleagues. This procedure was also used with the ARPI scales.

Results and Conclusions

For the school administrators with colleague questionnaires, the means

on the ARPI scales were: Expectation (27.9); Motivation (36.2); Psycho-Physical State (33.5); Relationships (39.5); Accomplishment (39.6); Time (29.4); and Total (177.0). In comparison with the total sample, all means were within one point of one another for each scale (with the exception of Total which had a difference of approximately two points). The subsample tended to exhibit slightly less burnout but the differences were small enough to consider the subsample to be a reasonable representation of the total group. (See Table 1.)

Table 1 about here

Using coefficient alpha, the internal consistency reliability of the total colleague questionnaire was .86. The coefficients of correlation between the total score on the colleague questionnaire and the ARPI scores were: Expectation (.20); Motivation (.25); Psycho-Physical State (.23); Relationships (.21); Accomplishment (.31); Time (.25); and Total (.31). With the exception of Expectation and Relationships, all were significant at the .05 level of significance. (See Table 2.) Since the possible range of scores on the Total ARPI is 50 (maximum burnout) to 250 (minimum burnout--healthy score), this sample was reasonably healthy (mean of 177), these significant but modest correlations indicate that colleagues can recognize burnout among administrators.

Table 2 about here

This interpretation is supported by an examination of selected items from the colleague questionnaire. "Longs for the 'good old days'" seems to

indicate a lowering of motivation (r = -.32). Also, "Feels disillusioned about how the job has turned out" was found to be related to a lowering of Motivation (-.36), Expectation (-.19), and Total (-.39). "Views his/her job as significant, having impact on others" was related to Accomplishment (.34), as well as Total (.27). Also, "Receives great satisfaction from doing the job well" was related to feelings of Accomplishment (.35) and Total (.33). As to be expected, "Is emotionally drained" was related to a lowering of Psycho-Physical State (-.38), Expectation (-.28), Time (-.35), and Total (-.36). "Is isolated from other staff" was negatively related to Relationships (-.25). (These correlations ranged in probabilities from .05 to beyond .001.)

Education Importance of the Study

The administrator is the key to educationally effective and efficiently managed schools. In order to be an effective leader, the administrator must be able to relate well with staff, students and parents, be highly motivated and positive in attitude in order to motivate others to positive action, and hold reasonable expectation as to what can and should be accomplished. The characteristics of the burned-out individual are antithesis to this -- depressed, lowering of motivation, isolation from others, and reduced accomplishment. If the superintendent is able to identify administrators who are burning-out, it should be possible to develop strategies to reduce the development of burnout among administrators and to help those administrators who are exhibiting burnout. This study suggests that it is possible to develop skills in identifying emerging burnout among administrators, perhaps aided by an inventory developed for this purpose. Certainly, the results support the position that burnout exists and that the characteristics of burnout within school administrators can be identified by colleagues.

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Table 1 Scale and Total Means and Stadard Deviations on the ARPI for the Total and Colleague Samples

Scales	Colleague Sample		Total Sample	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Expectation	27.88	5.40	28.07	5.44
Motivation	36.18	3.91	35.30	4.71
Psycho-Physical State	33.49	6.13	32.96	6.44
Relationships	39.52	3.28	39.07	4.29
Accomplishment	39.90	3.99	39.72	4.14
Time	29.42	4.19	28.68	4.71
Total ARPI	176.97	17.38	175.12	19.17

Table 2: Correlations Between the Colleague Ratings of Administrators and their ARPI Scale and Total Scores

Scale	Correlation	Significance
Expectation	.20	—
Motivation	.25	.05
Psycho-Physical State	.23	.05
Relationships	.21	—
Accomplishment	.31	.01
Time	.25	.05
Total ARPI	.31	.01